

C-17 aircrew ready for Rodeo competition



Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe

Staff Sgt. Eric Habenick, a loadmaster with the 17th Airlift Squadron, calculates weight measurements during a recent Rodeo practice session. The C-17 Rodeo aircrew teamed up with members of the 437th Aerial Port Squadron for the engine running off-load event.

By Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe
437 AW Public Affairs

"Cohesion" is the key for the C-17 aircrew Rodeo team.

Members of the team, Maj. Don Himebaugh, Capt. David McDonald and Staff Sgt. Eric Habenick, have been sharpening their skills in preparation for Rodeo 2000 competition, scheduled for May 6-13 at Pope AFB, N.C.

The C-17 aircrew will be evaluated on several events: engine running offload of vehicles (known as EROs), personnel airdrop, container delivery system airdrop and heavy equipment airdrop. Prior to the drops, the team will also be judged on identifying points along a low level flight, as well as its time over target.

Also included in the competition for the aircrew will be a two-day aerial refueling event, involving either a KC-10 or KC-135. Timing is crucial in this event, according to Himebaugh, a member of the 15th Airlift Squadron. They must be precise in meeting the refueler at the designated time and location. The C-17 aircrew will receive 3,000 pounds of fuel and remain connected with the tanker for 24 minutes.

Following that, the crew will return to Pope to be judged on an assault landing with the C-17. A 500-foot box will outline the landing area on the airfield. The crew must land within a 250-foot area within the box. Points will be deducted for each foot the aircraft is over the mark.

"We've been doing EROs almost twice a week, we've been flying twice a week doing multiple airdrops, quite a few aerial refuelings and assault zone landings up at North Field," Himebaugh said.

Practice has been going well for the C-17 aircrew, despite challenges presented by recent windy conditions, he added.

"The wind can throw you for a loop with airdrop and assault landings," Himebaugh explained.

"The whole thing is a challenge in itself."

The C-17 aircrew has been working with members of other units for its multi-faceted event - aerial porters, aircraft maintainers, joint airdrop inspectors and aerial refuelers from several bases.

"We feel privileged we've been selected to represent the base for the active duty wing," said Himebaugh, who flew a C-141 at Rodeo in 1990. "There's a lot of skill involved, but there's also a lot of luck involved. In order to win at Rodeo, you need to have a combination of those."

This year's Rodeo is the first for McDonald, a member of the 14th Airlift Squadron. "I'm excited about it," he said. "It's always good to have experience - we're lucky to have Major Himebaugh with us."

The crew has been training for about a month and honing their crew resource management skills to help develop cohesiveness, according to McDonald. "Every time we go up, we learn something new and figure out a better way to do something. One big factor about rodeo is getting the loadmaster involved upstairs. His role is key. He plays a big part in our low levels, chart reading - a lot of stuff. He has a lot more responsibility than he normally does."

Habenick is a loadmaster with the 17th Airlift Squadron. In addition to his airdrop duties and other responsibilities, he's been actively taking part in the mission planning phase with the pilots. "That's been an excellent experience," he commented. "I think we have a really good chance of taking it home this time. The maintenance and APS teams have been working hard. It's finally all coming together so can get everything in line to win this thing."

Himebaugh is also confident all of the hard work will pay off for everyone representing Charleston AFB.

"It's a great competition," he said. "It's an awful lot of work and an awful lot of fun. We hope to bring home the trophy and show it off to the base."

MXS merger ceremony changes hats, but not much more

By Lt. Col. Ed Memi
437 AW Public Affairs

All it took was a few minutes to case the flags of the 437th Equipment Maintenance Squadron and Component Repair Squadron, and then uncase the flag of the 437th Maintenance Squadron to make it officially the second largest and newest squadron on base.

Col. Don Gallion, 437th Logistics Group commander, presided over the Tuesday ceremony in the C-17 nosedock. He praised the leadership of all the commanders involved and the men and women of the logistics group for their professionalism.

In welcoming Maj. Herb Phillips as the new 437 MXS commander, he described them as "embarking on a journey that takes the talents of these two squadrons and merging them into one and I'm sure you'll lead them to greater lengths."

Lt. Col. Tony Williams, in relinquishing command of the 437th EMS, thanked his family, secretary, wing leadership and the men and women of the EMS for their great support.

Likewise, Maj. Ricky Cornelio expressed similar thanks. "It is hard to believe my time as commander for the finest group of professionals has come to an end...it's been a great ride," he said about his 20-months as the 437 CRS commander.

Cornelio assumed command of the 437th AGS Wednesday from Lt. Col. Paul Barlett, who will join Williams in a Pentagon assignment.

As the new commander of the 437 MXS, Phillips said, "It is a great day for Charleston AFB. Merging of the EMS and CRS will put all off-equipment aircraft maintenance activities under a single organization and, Team Charleston, will open a new chapter in the 437th Logistics Group where cooperation and mission accomplishment are corner-

stones of our success. This renewed spirit will be far-reaching."

Master Sgt. Kyle Allison, a former EMS member and NCOIC of pneudraulics section, said the change would not impact his section very much. "We mainly deal with the re-

pair of hydraulic components," he said. "We will lose a little bit of work when the C-141 goes away, but we'll probably pick up more on the C-17 side."

Senior Airmen Matt Hudson, a former CRS member and an Aerospace Ground Equipment mechanic, agreed

the change in squadron name would have little impact on him in maintaining air carts, power and lighting carts for the base's aircraft. "We used to have about 700 pieces of equipment, but are losing some as a result of the C-141s leaving."



Staff Sgt. Andrew Rodier

Members of the 437th Maintenance Squadron replace their old unit hats with new ones.